Summary

Securing America's Future Economy (SAFE) Commission

Entitlement and other federal program spending is projected to rise at unsustainable rates in the future. The SAFE Commission Act creates a 15-member commission to examine all areas of federal spending and revenue and offer solutions to place the United States on course to ensure the solvency of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and reduce the debt burden for future generations.

The commission will be comprised of 15 voting members, three of whom will be appointed by the president, three by the Senate majority leader, three by the Senate minority leader, three by the speaker of the House, and three by the House minority leader. The director of the Congressional Budget Office and the comptroller general of the United States will be appointed as non-voting ex-officio members of the commission to lend their expertise. The president will have the authority to appoint the chair from among the 15 voting members.

The commission will bring together the best minds associated with budget and economic policies to examine the long-term fiscal challenges facing the U.S. and develop legislation designed to: 1) address the imbalance between long term federal spending commitments and projected revenues; 2) increase net national savings to spur domestic investment and economic growth, and 3) improve the budget process to place greater emphasis on long-term fiscal issues.

In meeting its mandate to restore future solvency to entitlement programs, the commission may consider all policy options including: 1) limiting the growth of entitlement spending to ensure that the programs are fiscally sustainable; 2) strengthening the safety net functions of entitlement programs to provide assistance to the neediest; 3) making the tax code more efficient and encouraging economic growth; and 4) providing ways to increase private savings.

A critical component of the commission's work will be to engage the American people in a national dialog about the scope of the country's financial condition and solutions to the problem. After spending six months conducting town meetings around the country, the commission will present to Congress a report describing the long-term fiscal problems, public suggestions and views expressed during the town meetings and policy options available to ensure federal programs and entitlements are available for future generations.

With a bipartisan two-thirds majority vote, the commission will send to Congress a legislative package no later than 60 days after its initial report. The administration and Congress will have 60 additional days to develop actuarially equivalent proposals to achieve the same cost savings. Essentially, no later than 10 months from the organization of the commission, Congress would be required to vote – up or down – on each proposal offered. For example, if the interim report is delivered on January 1, the commission's legislative package would be due by March 1 and any alternative developed by Congress or the administration would have to be presented by May 1.

All proposals must include a 50-year CBO budget projection in addition to disclosing any impact on future federal liabilities. If more than one proposal receives a majority, the one garnering the greatest number of votes would prevail.